

*Several Complaints of Merchants and Traders of London,  
and other Ports of this Kingdom against the Commis-  
sioners and Officers of the Customs*

**T**hat by the Act of Tonnage and Poundage, 12 Car. 2. amongst other things it is provided and Enacted that all Merchants as well Denizens, as Strangers, coming into this Realm, shall be well and honestly entreated, and demeaned for such things as Subsidy by the said Act is granted, without oppression to them to be done, &c.

I. That the Commissioners of the Customs have of late, contrary to the said Act affronted and abused Merchants with scurrilous and foul Language, and other bad treatment, to the great discouragement of Trade, and oppression of the said Merchants; who have been forced to be at great expences in Law-suits for their Just-rights: and further where Merchants have petitioned the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury to be relieved in cases of the like nature, such petitions have been referred to the said Commissioners of the Customs for them to examine the contents and report their opinions thereupon to the said Lords Commissioners, wherein also the said Merchants have been treated and abused as aforesaid by the said Commissioners of the Customs.

II. That by the twenty Fourth Rule of the Book of Rates, made part of the aforesaid Act of Tonnage and Poundage, it is also provided that for avoiding all oppression by any of the Officers of the Customs in any Port of this Kingdom in exacting unreasonable Fees from the Merchant by reason of any Entry, or otherwise touching the shipping or unshipping of any Goods, Wares and Merchandises, no Officer, Clerk, or other belonging to any Custom-house whatsoever, shall exact, require, or receive, any other or greater Fee of any Merchant or other whatsoever, than such as are or shall be established by the Commons in Parliament Assembled, That if any Officer shall offend, contrary to the said Rule, he shall forfeit his Office and place, and be for ever after incapable of any Office in the Custom-house: That notwithstanding, the said Commissioners of the Customs have not only countenanced their Officers in exacting unreasonable Fees of Merchants and others, where no Fees were due, but also have by false suggestions procured several *Noli Prosequies* to be Entered up upon several Informations brought and exhibited in the Court of Exchequer against Officers for exacting such unreasonable Fees, whereby fair Merchants and Traders have been greatly oppressed.

III. By the 11th. Rule in the book of Rates, also made part of the aforesaid Act of Tonnage and Poundage, it is declared that if any Tobacco or other Goods or Merchandise brought into this Kingdom, shall receive any damage by Salt-water or otherwise, so that the owner thereof shall be prejudiced in the Sale of such Goods, the principal Officers of the Custom-house, or any two of them, whereof the Collector for the time being to be one, shall have power to Choose two indifferent Merchants experienced in the value of such Goods, who upon visiting the said Goods shall certify and declare upon their corporal Oaths, first administered by the said Officers, what damage such Goods have received, and are lessened in their true value, and according to such damage, in relation to the Rates set on them in this book, the said Officers are to make a proportionable abatement unto the Merchant or Owner of the Subsidy due for the same.

That, notwithstanding the said Rule and the good Provision thereby for the ease of Merchants, and encouragement of Trade, the said Commissioners have from time to time denied to permit Merchants to be chosen and sworn for viewing of damages and certifying allowances, as by the said Rule is directed, but on the contrary have appointed Surveyors, and other Officers of their own to view such damages, and to make such allowances, as to them only have seemed meet, denying to hear any complaint of Merchants, though never so justly aggrieved in the premises, and instead of making abatement of such damages, as their said Officers have allowed, off from the Original-Entry, or Post-Entry, Merchants have been forced to Enter and pay Custome for their whole quantities, and to be at the trouble and charge of Certificates for such allowances, &c. to the great injury of Merchants, discouragement of Trade, and contrary to the aforesaid Rule.

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IV. That



IV. That by several Acts of Parliament made in the Reigns of *Edward the 4th. Richard the 3d. Henry the 8th. and Caroline the 2d.* for many good reasons therein contained, amongst other things, Iron wyre, otherwise called White-wyre; Bone-lace, Buttons, and all manner of foreign Needle work are prohibited to be brought into this Kingdom, &c. that notwithstanding the said Acts of Parliament, great quantities of the said Commodities have been of late imported into this said Kingdom; by the encouragement of the said Commissioners upon payment of Custom, thereby frustrating the good intent of the said Laws, and impoverishing His Majesties Subjects employed in the manufacturing of the said Commodities in *England, &c.*

V. That by several other Acts made in the 18th. 20th. and 23d. years of the Reign of King *Charles the second*, all live Cattel, Beef, Pork and Bacon, and Fish taken by Foreigners are also prohibited to be brought into this Kingdom from *Ireland*, or any other Foreign Parts, under the penalty of the forfeiture of all such the said Cattel and Goods, so brought into this Kingdom, as also of the Ships and Vessels in which they are Imported, and makes the Importation of the said Cattel and Goods, a common Nuisance, and the avoiding and evading any of the penalties contained in the said Act to be *Premunire*.

That notwithstanding all which, the said Commissioners and Officers, sometimes upon payment of Custom, and at other times by pretended seizures of the said Goods for private rewards have combined with Foreigners and others, and caused to be imported great quantities of the Goods so prohibited by the said Acts, to the great decay of the Fishery of the Nation; and to the great prejudice of the Graziers, the Breeders of Cattel and Hogs, and the Curers of English Bacon, and other Traders of this Kingdom, and in high Contempt to the Authority of Parliament.

VI. That by an Act in the 29th and 30th years of King *Charles II.* all *French Wines*, Brandy, and other *French Goods*, for the Reasons therein contained, were prohibited to be Imported into this Kingdom, under the penalty of the forfeiture of the said Goods, viz. The Wines and Brandy to be staved, and the other Goods to be burnt, and also of the value of the said Goods to be recovered of the Importers, one Moiety thereof to the Poor of the Parish, where the said Goods should happen to be seized, and the other Moiety to him or them that should seize and sue for the same: And also the Importation of any of the said Goods was by the said Act declared to be a common Nuisance, and the Commissioners and Officers of the Customs were thereby required not only to seize and prosecute, but to be aiding and assisting to all others in seizing and prosecuting the same. That notwithstanding the said Act, and the good provision thereby, the said Commissioners and Officers of the Customs, did not only encourage Merchants to Import great quantities thereof, and to enter and pay Custom for the same, under sham denominations, but also did, as much as in them lay, discourage all persons who did endeavour to seize any of the Goods prohibited by the said Act, or prosecute persons Importing the same.

VII. That by one other Act made in the 12th year of King *Charles the II.* Entituled, *An Act for encouraging and encreasing the Shipping and Navigation of this Kingdom*, wherein, by the good Providence of God, the Wealth, Safety and Strength thereof is so much concerned: No Goods or Commodities whatsoever of the growth, production, or manufacture of *Asia, Africa or America*; or of any part thereof, &c. shall be Imported into *England, &c.* in any other Ships or Vessels whatsoever, but in such as do truly, and without fraud, belong only to the people of *England, &c.* and that no Goods or Commodities, that are of Foreign growth, production, or manufacture, shall be brought into this Kingdom, &c. in any Shipping whatsoever; from any place whatsoever; but only from the place of their said growth, production or manufacture, or from such Port or place where the said Commodities can only, or are, or usually have been first Shipped for Transportation, under the penalty of the forfeiture of all such Goods, together with the Ships and Vessels, with all their Furniture, Tackle and Apparel, in which they, or any of them, shall be Imported; That the said Commissioners and Officers of the Customs, have (under pretence of improving the said Customs) encouraged the Importation of the said Commodities from *Holland* and other places, in Foreign Shipping, &c. contrary to the true intent and meaning of the said Act, and in contempt of the same, to the great prejudice, not only of the Shipping of this Kingdom, (which have been thereby lessened near a third part in their real value) but also to the great discouragement of the Seamen thereof, who have also been thereby (together with the hard usage of the said Commissioners in other trivial matters) forced to Sail with Foreign Nations.